

1,467 Fountains

“¿qué país es éste para el viajero, donde la más mísera posada está tan llena de aventuras como un castillo encantado y cada comida es en sí un logro! que le dan un sabor tan exquisito a la querida, ¡vieja y romántica España!”-Washington Irving

“what a country this is for the traveler, where the most miserable inn is as full of adventures as an enchanted castle and every meal is itself an achievement! that give a taste so exquisite to the beloved, old and romantic Spain!”-Washington Irving

In the fall of 2017, a college student by the name of Rachel, whose yearnings to travel had brought her to Spain, made a trip from Bilbao, the city she was studying abroad in, to Granada in the company of friends, other college students. Coincidence had brought them together from different parts of the United States and a similarity of taste for travel and Spain led them to study together in Bilbao and travel together to the romantic mountains of Andalusia to see the Alhambra, the great, red, palace and fortress in the city of Granada.

The sun had set over the ancient city in southern Spain. Not quite in the center of the main plaza was a fountain decorated with lions, pomegranates, and lit up from beneath the water; it was a glowing golden beacon against the dark, black sky above. Rachel and Adriana sat in front of one of the lions, waiting for the rest of their group to join them. It was 8 o'clock on a Saturday night and the plaza was full of people, natives and tourists alike, heading out to the bars. Most Granadans would not be heading to dinner for a least another hour but it was prime time for tapas.

“They’re late,” said Rachel. Lunch had been hours ago, and she was ready to eat.

“They aren’t that late,” Adriana responded trying to calm her friend who she could tell was starting to get hangry. “And look there is Jace now, only five minutes late, which is early for the Spanish.”

“Fair point but we are not Spanish.” Rachel pointed out as Jace joined them at the fountain.

“Sorry I’m late,” he said, specifically addressing Rachel, “Ben’s feeling sick, so I walked him back to the hostel. He said he’d be fine by morning but just wants to sleep tonight.”

“That sucks!” said Adriana as the group started to walk, “He’s the best at picking out the good tapas.”

“I think we will survive one night without his expertise. And this is the place.” Announced Rachel as she approached the bar that had the words “Casa Lola” mosaiced in elegant cursive letters above the door.

“Of course, it’s the busiest bar in the plaza,” said Rachel, looking for a table as they walked inside.

“Hey, that means it’s the best bar around.”

“Jace, you say that every time we go somewhere busy,” Rachel said matter-of-factly. “Just because it’s crowded does not mean it’s good. Could just be a tourist trap.”

“Ever the pessimist Rach,” replied Jace.

Adriana cut in, not wanting conversation to devolve into an argument, “Just listen to the crowd, most are speaking Spanish.” Rachel took her advice and really looked at and listened to the mass inside the bar. There was an eclectic combination of Spaniards, pushing through the sea of people towards the bar while waving their hands to get the attention of the bartenders, as well as confused tourists trying to figure out what exactly *pulpo a la plancha* was and looking frustrated as they were pushed aside by the natives and ignored by the bartenders. “Also,” she added, “Our tour guide from earlier said this is a favorite for Granadans and that’s why so many tourists come too.”

“Yeah but it means it’s packed in there,” said Rachel, “So we’ll have to be aggressive, *como los españoles*, to get a table big enough for all of us or we’ll have to go somewhere else.”

They started to look for a table when a woman who was sitting close by with a group of friends asked Rachel, “*¿Buscas una mesa? porque mis amigos y yo estamos a punto de irnos, pues puedes tener esta.*”

“*Muchas gracias,*” she told the woman before calling over her friends.

“*Ah, eres estadounidense, ¿Qué estás haciendo en Granada?*”

“*Estoy estudiando en Bilbao este semestre. Y mis amigos estamos en Granada durante el fin de semana para ver la Alhambra.*”

“*Y para salir de la lluvia para un fin de semana,*” added Jace as he joined the conversation.

The women laughed, “*Entonces es una buena cosa que no vinisteis la semana pasada. Llovió todo el fin de semana,*” By this point, the Adriana had arrived at the table and the women who had so graciously given up their table were getting up to leave.

“*Disfrutad de su tiempo aquí en España, y si vosotros estáis pedido tapas o pinchos aquí, recomiendo Ibérico Lola, Pepito Lola y las croquetas y su sangría es la mejor de toda España.*¹”

“*Gracias.*”

“*Hasta luego.*”

“*Hasta luego,*” They all said as they finally sat down at the table.

“Well that was nice of them,” Jace said as he picked up the menu.

¹ Are you looking for a table? Because my friends and I are about to leave so you can have this one.

Thanks a lot.

Ah, you’re from the US. What are you doing in Granada?

I’m studying in Bilbao for the semester. And my friends and I are in Granada for the weekend to see the Alhambra.

And to get out of the rain for the weekend.

Then it’s a good thing you did not come last week. It rained all weekend.

Enjoy your times in here in Spain, and if you are here for tapas or pinchos, I recommend the Iberico Lola, pepito Lola and the croquets, and the sangria is the best in all of Spain.

“I am definitely going to get sangria.” Rachel mentioned as she looked around the bar for a waiter. After a few minutes she successfully waved one down.

“Wait! I don’t know what I want yet!” Adriana said.

“It’s fine we’ll just get drinks now. We are still in Spain so, you know, you’ll have plenty of time to look over the menu before he comes back with our drinks,” said Rachel.

“What is *lomo*?”

“Pork loin” Rachel and Jace replied simultaneously.

The waiter came and took their drink orders. 10 minutes later he brought back their drinks and took their food order, so they did have plenty of time to look at the menu. Wait staff in Spain are notorious for bad service, however, this particular night the group lucked out, because although the service was slow, their waiter was an unusually happy middle-aged man with salt and pepper hair, who had lived in Granada his entire life. He was a very chatty and friendly man — almost too friendly. He spent extra time talking to customers at each of his tables and was very helpful about giving recommendations about the best tapas in the bar. When he finally came back with the food, the group was discussing their trip to the Alhambra the day before.

“I still wish we had paid the extra €20 and done a tour,” said Rachel, still a little frustrated that her friends had not appropriately budgeted for the weekend.

“It doubled the cost,” replied Jace.

“Yes, but with the tour we could have actually learned something about the history and what the Arabic writing on the walls said instead of just walking around for three hours saying ‘wow I wish I knew what this meant’,” Rachel shot back.

Adriana, the acting intermediary for the group for the weekend stepped in, “Well it was fun either way and at least now we can spend the saved money in Paris next weekend.”

The waiter arrived, food in hand, and having overheard part of their conversation he said,

“¿Cómo os gustó a nuestro gran palacio rojo?”

“Es genial y tan preciosa, especialmente con las hojas que cambian de color,” said Rachel

“¿Pero no hicisteis el tour?”

“No, fue demasiado caro, y somos estudiantes muy pobres,” Jace answered sarcastically.

“Es una lástima. Los guías son muy buenos. Pero en Granada pensamos que la mejor manera de conocer la historia de la Alhambra es ir de noche.”

“¿Te refieres a hacer el tour nocturno?”

*“No exactamente,”*² said the waiter with a glint of mischief in his eyes. He set down all their food and went back to work.

“Well that was mysterious,” said Adriana eagerly look at her tapas.

“Yeah,” Rachel whispered. “I think he just suggested we break in to the Alhambra at night to learn more about its history.”

“Well we don’t have any other plans for tonight,” Jace said.

“I hope you’re joking because getting arrested for breaking and entering does not sound like my idea of a good night, Jace.”

² How did you like our great red palace?

It was wonderful and beautiful, especially with the leaves changing colors.

But you did not do a tour?

No, it was too expensive, and we are poor students.

That’s a shame. The guides are very good. But in Granada we think the best way to know the history of the Alhambra is to go at night.

Are you referring to the night tour?

Not exactly.

“Of course I was joking,” he said. “Now, ¿*donde está el baño?* I want to wash my hands before I eat.” Adriana pointed it out to him and the girls watched as he sauntered away. Only Rachel saw that on his way back he stopped their waiter. He asked him a question and she thought she saw him slide something into Jace’s hand.

“It is a bit early to ask for the check. We haven’t even eaten yet,” said Rachel when he got back to the table.

“Yeah, I didn’t. I asked him about something else. And don’t worry about it” he said, cutting the girls impending question.

“I just hope you didn’t ask him how to break into the Alhambra” Rachel said shortly.

“And why would I do that?”

Adriana cut in, “Com’on guys, let’s not do this, let’s talk about something else.”

“Like how good this Sangria actually is. That woman was right, it is the best.”

For the rest of the meal there was no more conversation about the Alhambra or breaking and entering. The friends turned to such topics like what they would do in Paris the following weekend, how they could not believe they only had three more weeks left abroad, and if getting ice cream after dinner was within their budgets. All the while, Jace was fiddling with an old, rusty key underneath the table.

After Casa Lola they decided ice cream was in their budget as long as they did not go to the clubs that night. So, they ended up back at their hostel early, or at least early for the Spanish. Not really knowing what else to do, Jace, Rachel, and Adriana quietly, as to not wake up Ben, went to their room. Adriana sat down on her bed and within five minutes had fallen asleep, still wearing her clothes. Rachel laid down on her bed and picked up the book about magic she

bought in London the week before. Jace took the key out of his pocket and just stared at it.

Eventually, he hopped off his bed and went to sit next to Rachel, disturbing her from her reading.

Without looking up from her book she said aggravatedly, “What do you want Jason?”

“Don’t call me Jason, only my mother calls me that.”

She looked up, “Yes, I know, and she only calls you ‘Jason’ when she is annoyed. I was trying to give you a hint. What do you want?”

“It’s our last night in Granada. You really just going to stay in and read?”

“We went out last night and we got ice cream tonight instead. I don’t want to spend more money.”

“But I’m not tired yet.”

“Absolutely not, I told you we are done with that *and* there are other people in the room” she said, pointing at Adriana who was still passed out on top of the blankets.

“Yes, you made yourself very clear last time, but I love that’s where your mind went.” Rachel put down the book and glared at him. “But anyway, that’s not what I meant,” Jace said, trying to avoid her gaze.

“What did you mean then?”

“I just think we should do something and not stay in all night. Let’s get out of the room. Let’s go explore!”

“What do you want to do? And I already told you I don’t want to spend any more money.”

“What if we do something free?”

“Why? Have something in mind?”

“I mean, yeah...remember the waiter at dinner?”

Rachel realized what he was going to suggest, and she could not say she was surprised.

Whenever Jason Cafery had an idea it always led to trouble.

“Absolutely not. We are not going to break into the Alhambra! Especially just because a waiter told us to!”

“But he was a really cool guy. And would it be breaking in if we had a key?” He showed her the key the waiter had given him.

“Yes!” she whispered, trying not wake up Adriana and Ben. “And why would a waiter have a key to the Alhambra?”

“He told me it was a family heirloom, and that it was the one Boabdil gave to the Catholic Kings when he surrendered Granada.”

“And you believed him?” she remarked skeptically, “and please tell me you did not pay for that.”

Jace stared at her for a second before saying, “No I didn’t believe him, if it was really a family heirloom why would he give it to some random *estadounidense*?” He paused, then looking away from her he added, “and he said he wanted me to have it because it’s a good way to get girls.”

“Why do I still hang out with you?” Rachel whispered to herself, though not very quietly and Jace heard her but just ignored it.

“Com’on, let’s at least go back to the view point. The one from where we can see the entire side of the Alhambra, that we saw yesterday. It’s supposed to be even better at night.”

“No.” Rachel said curtly, picking back up her book.

“I’ll buy your dinner next time we go out. And drinks” Jace had known Rachel long enough to know that she was unlikely to turn this offer down.

She put down the book again, “You’ll buy me a drink every time we go out for the next three weeks.”

“Fine. But wine and *kalimotxos* only, I’m not paying for mixed drinks.”

“Deal.” She held out her hand, Jace rolled his eyes before shaking.

“Should we invite about sleeping beauty?” questioned Jace glancing back at Adriana while he and Rachel looked for their shoes.

“Well if we are going to engage in trespassing, we may need her experience.” Rachel said sarcastically.

“Wait, what?”

“Apparently, she may or may not have been arrested, or almost arrested for trespassing and vandalism. I don’t know she wouldn’t really tell me...But you didn’t hear it from me.”

“Ohhh, maybe that’s why she has that 10-point plan to survive in prison.” Jace was happy to see that his comment had made Rachel laugh— she rarely did laugh around him these days.

“Probably,” Rachel said going to wake Adriana up, “but her plan is for US prisons not Spanish ones so there will still be no breaking and entering tonight.”

Jace let the conversation drop. Adriana, now awake, decided that walking around the city at night did sound like fun, though she thought they should just let Ben sleep, no need to wake him up if he was sick. So, the three of them put on their hats and coats and headed out, Granada may be in the South of Spain, but it still got cold in December.

On their way out, Rachel stayed back for a second to write a note for Ben just in case he woke up and wanted to see where the other three were. When she rejoined Adriana and Jace just outside the hostel, they were whispering to each other and Jace was showing Adriana something.

They started walking in the direction of the Alhambra, but after about 10 minutes, Jace and Adriana turned to the right and Rachel continued to go straight.

“Where are you guys going? The viewpoint is this way. That way goes up to the ente-” she stopped mid-sentence, realizing what Jace was showing Adriana when she had joined them. “No, no. I said I wasn’t going to do this.”

“We just think we should try to get as close as we can. See what if the waiter said was true about understanding the history better if you go after hours.” Adriana said innocently.

“Yeah,” Jace added, attempting to mimic the same innocent tone Adriana had used, but failing,

“There’s no harm in just walking around the grounds outside the gates. It is public property.”

“This is a bad idea.” Rachel said, but reluctantly followed them. She didn’t want to walk back to the hostel alone in the dark and didn’t even want to think about what the two of them would do if she did not go with them.

The three of them walked side by side, Adriana in the middle, as they started to ascend the hill to the gate of the grounds of the Alhambra. Whether or not Jace was right about the grounds being open to the public, the gate wasn’t closed and there was no one guarding it, which made Rachel feel marginally better about what they were doing. Everything looked different at night. During the day, the sun had been shining through the canopy of trees, reflecting off the reds and yellows of the fall leaves that lined the path, giving it a warm welcoming feel. Now, in the dark, in the eerie moonlight, the leaves just looked dead, and the canopy seemed to be trapping them in, cutting off access to the stars. And given all the history that had happened in Granada, in the Alhambra, Rachel wasn’t sure it wasn’t haunted. It didn’t help that as they passed the statue of Washington Irving, his eyes seemed to follow them as they continued their ascent. She

looked ahead, trying unsuccessfully to prevent thoughts of *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* from entering her head. Looking at Adriana, Rachel knew she was thinking the same.

Out of nowhere came the sound of metal hitting the ground. All three of them jumped, Adriana let out a little shriek.

“What the fuck was that?!” Rachel whispered in a panicked voice, looking back at the statue of Irving, just to make sure it hadn’t moved. Seeing that it hadn’t she felt a little foolish, but less so after seeing that Jace had done the same.

Adriana knelt down and she picked something up off the ground. “It was a spoon! A spoon just fell out of my pocket!” she exclaimed. Rachel started to laugh.

“What?!” Jace said, looking from the spoon to Adriana to Rachel and back.

“Oh my god.” Rachel said in-between laughs. “I can’t believe you didn’t take it out of your pocket after our picnic last week.” Adriana started to laugh with her.

“Well then,” he said, clearly not as amused as his two female companions, “at least we know it wasn’t the statue coming to life like some *Night at the Museum* shit... And here is the door.”

“What door?” Rachel said, having finally contained her laughter. “The entrance is still another quarter mile up.”

Adriana and Jace glanced at each other before Adriana said, “This is the door that the waiter said the key opens.”

They all looked at the door. It was a small one embedded in the wall, surrounded by overgrown vines. A small staircase led from the path they were on, up to the door. It was ancient almost old enough to have been part of the original construction.

“I told you before we left I was not breaking in anywhere.” Rachel said to Jace.

“It’s not breaking in if we have a key,” chided Adriana.

“Why do you both think that’s good logic? It’s still breaking in because we are using a key we are not supposed to have.”

“Com’on Rach,” Jace said, putting a hand on her shoulder, which she immediately shrugged off.

“Let’s just see if they key works. It would be a waste not to. Besides, it probably won’t work and then we can be on our merry way. And if it does, well then it’s meant to be” Adriana nodded in agreement.

“Fine.” Rachel said grudgingly. Jace was already walking up the small staircase to the ancient door. He slid the key in and after a moment they heard a small *click*. Jace turned the handle and the door squeaked open.

“Holy shit, I can’t believe it,” he whispered, and then disappeared behind the door, Adriana close on his heels.

Rachel stood there for a moment, stunned. She could not believe the key worked. Maybe it was meant to be. She turned her head back to look behind her. Just for a moment it looked as if the Washington Irving statue was gone. It was just a trick of the night, she told herself, before following Jace and Adriana into the Alhambra. She didn’t want to break in, but she definitely did not want to be left alone, in a place she was now sure was haunted.

Once through the door, Rachel found Jace and Adriana a couple feet into the Alhambra, on the top of a small hill. They were standing there in silence, just looking out with an awed expression on their faces. Rachel walked up to join them. She was about to ask what they were looking so intently at but before her lips could form the question, she saw it for herself. In between a gap in the trees there was a view of the city of Granada. They had seen this view during the day but at night it was completely different and had an indescribable beauty. The city glowed. Each house light and street lamp looked like fireflies shining out in the distance. And

despite the fact the Alhambra was silent, save for the sounds of nature, Rachel could imagine the noise from the center of the city; bars and clubs would be starting to fill up with young people going out for the night.

Adriana was the first to break their silence. “Can you imagine what it would have looked like 600 years ago?”

“With fires burning instead of street lights. And people in the streets playing the *zambra* and speaking a Spanish we couldn’t recognize.” Rachel thought back to the history she knew about Granada during the Muslim rule of Spain. It hadn’t become the center of Muslim rule in Spain, until that rule was in decline in the 13th century, when the Alhambra was built in 1238. Instead, it became the last stronghold for the Muslim Empire and was the last city to fall to the Catholic Kings in the *Reconquista*. According to the stories about that fateful day in January 1492 when Boabdil, the last califate of Granada, the last Muslim ruler of Spain, surrendered the city to the Catholic Kings, Isabel and Fernando, and gave them the key to his red palace. Then as he left, he b looked back one more time and as he cried for the loss of the Alhambra. His mother said to him, “You weep like a woman for what you failed to defend like a man.”

“Guys, look, the bushes.” Adriana whispered, pulling Rachel out of her trance. Jace and Rachel followed her gaze. Rachel’s heart stopped. There were three sets of small, round, glowing, yellow eyes staring at them from the bushes.

“Oh my god, we are going to die.” Adriana whimpered

“Damnit Jace why is always because of you that I end up in bad situations,” Rachel snapped.

They stood there frozen for a moment until one of the pairs of eyes disappeared. Out of the corner of her eye, Rachel saw something orange in the moonlight, and she suddenly realized whose eyes they were, but Adriana beat her too it.

“It’s just the cats.” Yesterday, when they had come to Alhambra, there had been probably thirty cats walking around, everywhere.

“Fuck, I totally forgot about that.” Jace said, trying to sound brave, but both girls heard the relief in his voice.

Adriana, ever the cat person stepped closer to the cats, “Do you think since we are the only people here they will let me pet them this time?” she said as she disappeared momentarily behind the bushes looking for the cats.

Jace looked at Rachel, “What do you mean, it’s always because of me that you end up in bad situations? Adriana wanted you to come here too.”

Rachel stared at him, “you really don’t know what I was talking about? Don’t even want to take a guess?”

“Rach, com’on, that was three years ago. You can’t blame me, at least not entirely, for everything that happened that night.”

“I’m not sure I do. Regardless of our failed relationship, if you could have even have called it a relationship, I didn’t even want to go out that night, but you convinced me too, like you convinced me to come here tonight, and then you left me alone.” Jace was stunned, but Rachel answered his question before he could ask it, “Sometimes I still blame you for what happened, but it does not mean that I didn’t forgive you. I wanted — needed — to move on and that was the only way. I missed your being a part of my life.”

They stood there, Rachel looked away from him, gazing back out at the view, while Jace stared at her, trying to find something to say, but before his thoughts could form into cohesive words Adriana returned from the cats.

“Where to now?” she said, sensing the change in atmosphere around Jace and Rachel but chose not to bring it up incase it made matters worse.

Rachel pushed down her feelings about the conversation she and Jace just had and said, “Let’s go to *Generalife*. We are not going to be able to get in any of the buildings, and I am not even going to try, so let’s stick to the gardens.”

Jace, who felt he was in no position to disagree with her in that moment, agreed. They began to walk towards the immense gardens of the Alhambra.

“I wonder if any of the fountains will be on,” Adriana wondered out loud.

“Well there are 1,467 of them. It would be a pain to turn them all off every night to just have to turn them on again the morning.”

Adriana and Jace laughed. The actually had no idea if there were 1,467 fountains in the Alhambra. That number came from yesterday. Ben had asked how many fountains there were and, Adriana, the queen of false facts, had made up that number without missing a beat. She sounded so confident saying it that Ben still believed that was how many fountains there were. Jace and Rachel, however, did not fall for that trick. They just helped her by reinforcing that that was the actual number.

They entered *Generalife* (sadly, the fountains were turned off) and made their way down the path into the heart of the gardens. Like the view, the gardens looked different at night. The colors were more muted than they had been in the day, but it was no less beautiful. The moon reflected of a large rectangular pool which cast a white light onto the surrounding plants and trees. It was like each leaf and flower was glowing. The effect was almost magical. When they reached the central patio area, Rachel got the feeling they weren’t alone. She looked around, hoping the feeling was just because of the cats. Then standing in the shadows, beneath the patio

overhang, was a man leaning on a pole, looking out at another view of the city. Rachel silently, got Jace and Adriana's attention and pointed to the man in the shadows. The three of them started to back away slowly, deciding that now would be a good time to leave. Before they could get very far, the man, without turning around, said in Spanish but with a heavy American accent, "*No hay necesidad de escabullirse silenciosamente, ya sé que estáis ahí.*"

They froze. The man turned to face them and stepped out of the shadows. He did not look like a security guard. In fact, he was wearing a suit, but it wasn't a modern one. Rachel thought it looked like a vintage suit from the early 19th century.

"*No estábamos buscando ningún p-problema,*" Jace said, his voice shaking. "*Estábamos pasando por la Alhambra en n-nuestro camino de vuelta a nuestro hostel y nos dicen que había una puerta en la pared a-abierta y...*"

The man chuckled, "*no os preocupes. Siempre y cuando no cause ningún daño al Palacio no me importa que estéis aquí. De hecho, acojo con satisfacción la compañía*³." He paused then added, in English, "Especially when it is the company of fellow countrymen. It has been a long time since I have had the pleasure of speaking with Americans in my native tongue. Besides, you are not the first and I dare say you will not be the last to sneak in and explore the wonders of the Alhambra after nightfall."

Jace, Rachel, and Adriana all looked at each other, then to the stranger, and back at each other again. He didn't seem threatening. It was Jace who finally spoke, "I'm sorry, but who are you?"

³ It is not necessary to sneak out silently, I already know you are here.

We are not looking for any trouble. We were walking past the Alhambra on the way back to our hostel and the door in the wall was open...

No need to worry. As long as you do not cause any damage to the Palace, I do not care that you are here. In fact I welcome the satisfaction of company.

“Just someone who, many years ago, had the opportunity to come and stay and write here at the Alhambra, and now, it appears, I cannot leave.” Rachel had many questions about what exactly that meant but before she could ask, the man said, “and who might you be?”

Adriana finally answered; “We are students, from the United States. We’re doing a semester abroad in the north of Spain and came to Granada to see the Alhambra this weekend. We are here now because at dinner a waiter gave us a key and told us to come here after hours, because it was the best way to learn about the Alhambra.... Did he mean that we should come talk to you?”

The man smiled. “My presence here is somewhat of a legend to many native Granadans, and I do know of many tales of what happened here. So yes, it is quite possible he sent you here to speak to me. What would you like to know?” He gestured for them to come sit on the bench across from him. Rachel did not think that he was dangerous, and even if he was, there were three of them and one of him. Unsure of what else to do and curious as to what “tales” he could tell them, she went to sit on the bench. Jace, who had started to run the other way, saw that Rachel had moved towards the bench. He could not—he would not—leave her alone again, and he went to join her. Adriana followed.

“Is there anything in particular you would like to know?” asked the man after they had settled on the bench.

“Well the man who told us to come here tonight said that this was the best way to understand the history here,” Rachel said.

The man smiled. “Then some history....Perhaps there never was a monument more characteristic of an age and people than the Alhambra; a rugged fortress without, a voluptuous

palace within; war frowning from its battlements; poetry breathing throughout the fairy architecture of its halls.

“In the time of the Moors, the fortress was capable of containing within its outward precincts an army of forty thousand men and served occasionally as a stronghold of the sovereigns against their rebellious subjects. After the kingdom had passed into the hands of the Christians, the Alhambra continued to be a royal demesne, and was occasionally inhabited by the Castilian monarchs. The emperor Charles V. commenced a sumptuous palace within its walls, but was deterred from completing it by repeated shocks of earthquakes. The last royal residents were Philip V and his beautiful queen, Elizabetta of Parma, early in the eighteenth century. Great preparations were made for their reception. The palace and gardens were placed in a state of repair, and a new suite of apartments erected, and decorated by artists brought from Italy. However, the sojourn of the sovereigns was transient, and after their departure the palace once more became desolate. Still the place was maintained with some military state.

“The desertion of the court, however, was a fatal blow to the Alhambra. Its beautiful halls became desolate, and some of them fell to ruin; the gardens were destroyed, and the fountains ceased to play. But, eventually, the roofs were repaired, the saloons and galleries protected from the weather, the gardens cultivated, the watercourses restored, the fountains once more made to throw up their sparkling showers.”

Rachel, Jace, and Adriana sat on the bench and listened to the man tell his tales about what may or may not have actually happened in the Alhambra. Some of them, they believed could be based in truth. He told them who in general lived in the Alhambra, what the gardens of *Genealife* used to look like, and how they had changed over the years. He told them of the changes the Catholic Kings and Carlos V had made to the palace and grounds after the exile of

Boabdil in 1492. He pointed out one of those changes that were right in front of them, in the tile work on the path was the crest of the kingdom of Spain, united for the first time under Isabel and Fernando. Some of the other tales were less believable, such as the fairy who lived under the stairs in the Nasrid Palaces or the Moorish King of Granada who had a son, Ahmed, who he locked away in *Generalife* because of predictions of astrologists that woman would ruin his destiny to be a great ruler.

They listened, enraptured by the stories, until the first rays of sun began to rise in the sky. The great storyteller knew that with the sunrise his three guests from the night would have to be on their way and so he ended his story telling for the night with the tale of Lope Sánchez. When he finished his final tale, the colors of day were just beginning to return. Rachel, Jace, and Adriana thanked the man for his time and for his stories.

“And thank you for listening. But now, my friends I am afraid it is time. Hasten from this prospect before the sun is risen. And carry away a recollection of it clothed in all its beauty.” And with that, the man disappeared around a corner.

Rachel, Jace, and Adriana stayed for just a moment longer to watch the sun rise over the city. As the golden rays spilled over the snow-covered mountain tops, they knew they could not stay for too long. Just after the sun was in the sky, they snuck back out the little door they had come in. Once outside the walls of the Alhambra, Rachel paused to look at the statue of Washington Irving. Looking at the face, she thought it looked remarkably familiar. Jace interrupted her thoughts.

“Here,” He said, handing her the key, “You should keep it.”

“Why? If it had been up to me, we would never have used it, never have even tried to use it.”

“I don’t know. It just seemed right, that you should have it. You are the reason we even came to Granada.”

“Thanks,” she said softly, and she took the key. “He really did have some amazing stories.”

“Do you think anyone will ever believe us?” Adriana had joined them.

“I think people will have a hard-enough time believing that we successfully broke into the Alhambra at night without getting caught,” Rachel responded. “I think they would believe us less if we told them that while we were there Washington Irving told us tales of the Alhambra.”

“You really think it was Washington Irving?” Jace asked.

“Well I don’t know of any other Americans who stayed and wrote at the Alhambra,” Rachel said shrugging.

With that, they started their descent back down into the main part of the city of Granada and back to their hostel to check on Ben. They were hopeful that they could get a little sleep before catching their flight back to Bilbao. After spending all night there, Rachel thought she could understand why Boabdil had cried when he had to say goodbye to the Alhambra for the last time.